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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000252

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR AF/W
STATE FOR INR/AA
DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: INTERNECINE PDP POLITICS IN IMO STATE

REF: 06 LAGOS 1250

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Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (B and D)

11. (C) Summary: A March 29 visit by Poloff to Imo State showed the feuding People's Democratic Party (PDP) still trying to determine its candidate for Governor. The April 5 Supreme Court ruling in favor of Senator Ifeanyi Araraume makes him the favorite to make the ballot. Whoever takes the PDP nomination will be favored, but the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) candidate will be competitive. End summary.

Old Feuds Come to the Fore in the PDP Primary

12. (C) Poloff visited Imo State on March 29. Ben Duru, Correspondent for the Daily Independent, told Poloff the problems in the People's Democratic Party (PDP) go back to at least 2003. That year, Senator Ifeanyi Araraume supported Governor Achike Udenwa for a second term, and this move helped ensure the Governor's victory, Duru said. However, the friendship soon was tested.

13. (C) The PDP divided into two blocs, Abuja and Owerri. In 2005 the bitter infighting escalated and the national PDP dissolved the Imo State PDP. Udenwa partisans identified Araraume as a leading member of the rival Abuja bloc. Udenwa and Araraume had a falling out after 2003, and Udenwa not only failed to support Araraume, the Governor became diametrically opposed to his candidacy, Duru said.

14. (C) The Owerri/Udenwa bloc had five candidates for Governor and the Governor's partisans split their vote, Duru observed. Ike Ibe, the Governor's favorite, lost the primary to Araraume. In four days, the PDP ran the primary vote twice and Araraume won the most votes both times. Subsequently, Araraume was declared the victor and his name was sent to the National PDP.

Ugwuh Emerges as the National PDP's Choice,
as Araraume Looks to the Courts for Redress

¶5. (C) Charles Ugwu, former President of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, was Obasanjo's choice for Governor because of his ardent support for a third term. In the December primary, Ugwu won only 36 votes to Araraume's total of over 2,000. With such a paltry total, Ugwu was not even among the frontrunners. Yet because of the mutual affinity shared with the President, Ugwu was not finished. In late December, the PDP replaced Araraume with Ugwu. Udenwa threw his support to Ugwu because he was willing to back anyone against Araraume at this point, Duru said.

¶6. (C) Araraume did not give up his fight for the nomination. Senator Araraume was familiar with the language of the Electoral Act of 2006, Duru said, and used this knowledge in his favor. In March the Abuja Court of Appeals ruled in Araraume's favor, judging the PDP did not give sufficient justification for the replacement of Araraume. The Supreme Court backed the Appeal Court by ruling in Araraume's favor on April 5. Duru did not know whether the PDP would follow the dictates of the court.

¶7. (C) Araraume has gained public sympathy for his long battle to gain the nomination. When Araraume returned to Owerri on March 27, huge crowds came out to support him. In contrast, Duru told Poloff while Udenwa was popular before the PDP primaries, his maneuverings since have cost him much of his popularity.

APGA Looks to Seize the Opportunity

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¶8. (C) Among the opposition parties, only the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) has a strong following in Imo. Both the All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) and the Action Congress (AC) have problems, Duru said. People suspect Udenwa sympathizes with the AC. With the Governor's fallen popularity this is a negative for the AC, Duru explained. APGA's strength comes from the support of the Catholic Church, which has significant influence on the Imo electorate. The Imo Archbishop is insisting on a free and fair election, Duru said.

¶9. (C) Poloff visited the headquarters of Martin Agbaso, APGA candidate for Governor. Cletus Nwaka, Imo State APGA Chairman, confidently predicted victory. On APGA's popularity in Imo State, Nwaka joked he always tells his PDP friends "While they may vote for the PDP, their driver, cook, and housekeeper will vote for APGA". Nwaka said the popularity of APGA's presidential candidate Dim Chukwuemeka Ojukwu, helped APGA in the State. Agbaso, former Advisor on Ecology to Obasanjo, is also a former Senator who ran unsuccessfully for Governor in 2003.

¶10. (C) Duru predicted if Araraume is the candidate, the PDP will win. However, if Ugwu ran APGA could win. Duru also considered vote manipulation likely. There was massive manipulation in 1999, less so in 2003, so hopefully there would be less in 2007, Duru said. Although violence could occur, Duru did not believe Imo State was prone to violence, though he said there were 4 or 5 vulnerable Local Government Areas.

Comment

¶11. (C) Like other states in Southern Nigeria, the most

intense activity centers around the state and local elections, not the presidential election. The Imo State PDP's internecine party conflict has seemingly climaxed in a bitter nomination fight. Nevertheless, whoever emerges from this fog to represent the PDP will be favored. Vote manipulation, a characteristic of Imo elections, will likely happen. While the State has seen less violence than other Southeastern states, some violence is likely to occur. End comment.

BROWNE